

2008 Hurricane Season Summary

This hurricane season brought about a return to more active and intense tropical cyclones, compared to the 2007 season. The season had a total of 16 tropical storms (above the average of 11 storms per season), 8 storms became hurricanes (average is 6), and 5 of those hurricanes became major hurricanes (average is ~2.5 a year). The table below provides the names for each storm this season as well as the dates each occurred and the maximum sustained wind speed.

The numbers above are on the upper end of the range predicted by NOAA's Climate Prediction Center back in May of this year (12-16 storms, 6-9 hurricanes, and 2-5 major hurricanes). The above normal forecast was based on the strong La Nina conditions that had occurred earlier in the year, combined with a longer-term upswing in Atlantic activity based on the multi-decadal scale oscillation. By the end of the season, however the waters over the Eastern Equatorial Pacific Ocean had returned to normal values, with the state of the Pacific now classified as Neutral.

Storm Name	Dates	Max Wind (1 min., mph)	Storm Name	Dates	Max Wind (1 min., mph)
TS Arthur	5/31-6/1	45	TS Josephine*	9/2-6	65
Bertha (Cat. 3)	7/3-20	125	Kyle (Cat. 1)*	9/25-29	80
TS Cristobal	7/19-23	65	TS Laura*	9/29-10/1	60
Dolly (Cat. 2)*	7/20-25	100	TS Marco	10/6-7	65
TS Edouard	8/3-6	65	TS Nana*	10/12-14	40
TS Fay*	8/15-26	65	Omar (Cat. 3)*	10/13-18	125
Gustav (Cat. 4)*	8/25-9/4	150	TD 16	10/14-15	30
Hanna (Cat. 1)*	8/28-9/7	80	Paloma (Cat. 4)*	11/5-10	145
Ike (Cat. 4)*	9/1-14	145			

Source: National Hurricane Center Official Cyclone Reports

* Official NHC report not received as of 11/25.

A few unique statistics about this hurricane season and the active long-term period we are in:

- * Set a record for most consecutive-named storms making landfall in the U.S. (at 6 with Dolly through Ike). The previous record was 5, set 5 times before in 2004, 2002, 1985, 1979, and 1971)
- * With 6 U.S. landfalls this year, we now go to 42 landfalls from 2001-2008. The previous record for a decade was 40 from 1931-1940.
- * Have had 11 years in a row of 10 or more Tropical Storms in a season. The previous record for consecutive years was 4, set from 1942-1945.
- * A major hurricane was in the Atlantic basin each month from July through November, the first time that has been recorded.
- * Cuba was hit by 3 major hurricanes, Gustav, Ike, and Paloma...Gustav and Ike hit 8 days apart.

As mentioned above, several systems affected the U.S. In addition to the 6 storms above, Cristobal came close to a landfall just off the Outer Banks of North Carolina and Kyle made landfall just east of Maine. As of the time of this writing, tropical cyclones from this busy season caused 40-45 billion dollars in damage and killed at least 129 people in the U.S.

As for storms that affected Florida, Tropical Storm Fay was known to many Floridians because of the slow motion of the storm after it made landfall over southwest Florida. After landfall in Naples (Fay's

second as the first was over Key West), Fay travelled northeast toward Lake Okeechobee and then over the East Coast near Melbourne. During this trek, Fay dumped up to 16 inches of rain just east of Fort Myers in Lee county and then up to 25 inches of rain near Melbourne. Fay moved into the Atlantic and drifted north before turning west and making landfall again over the northeast Florida coast. Fay moved across north Florida, again dropping almost a foot of rain in some locations, before making a quick trip over Apalachee Bay. She made her fourth and final landfall near Carabelle before dissipating over Alabama and Mississippi.



Rainfall totals over a foot in Southern and Eastern Lee county caused sheet flooding that took almost two weeks to dissipate.

Two other systems had an indirect effect on the west and southwest coasts of Florida. Hurricanes Gustav and Ike each had a devastating impact on the island of Cuba before moving into the central Gulf of Mexico. As these storms moved toward the northwest Gulf, swells propagated towards our coast, causing dangerous surf conditions, strong rip currents with numerous rescues, as well as some minor coastal flooding.



National Weather Service forecaster Rick Davis riding the surf generated by Hurricane Gustav as it was over the central Gulf of Mexico.